

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State

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Chapter Eight

ISBN 978-0-8028-6285-3

Reviewed by Jim West

Here Eshel examines 4Q386. 'I believe that this text was brought to the community by a newcomer rather than composed by an author from the sect' (p. 151). His primary reason for this assertion is the fact that the author uses the Tetragrammaton '... which is not found in the sectarian scrolls characteristic of Qumran' (Ibid.). Whether or not this is the case, Eshel does not further discuss. I think it a bit perilous to assert that a particular text not belong to a particular author or group of authors on the basis of the presence or absence of one word. Eshel is probably right, but the argument is weak. An author may decide to use a word or not based on a number of considerations, some of which may not be discernible to persons living 2000 years after the fact.

Eshel further '... contend[s] that the designations “son of Belial” and “the Wicked One” refer to one figure rather than two...' (p. 155) in this fragment. His evidence is drawn from Jeremiah 46 and the Babylonian Chronicle. Assuming his presumption is correct, he next moves to identify this wicked person with Pompey. And again, he offers a substantive and fairly irrefutable argument for his opinion.

[On page 159 there is a typographical error about mid page: '... and it is possible that in the author viewed this verse...' Apparently this should be either '... and it is possible that in the author's viewpoint, this verse...' or '...and it is possible that the author viewed this verse...']

Eshel concludes with this sentence: 'If our assertion that this text refers to the assassination of Pompey is correct, we conclude that the author of 4Q386 shared similar views on historical events with the psalmist who composed the Psalms of Solomon' (p. 161). This conclusion is fairly interesting. If correct, both these texts may shed light on one another.

One chapter remains for examination. To it we turn next.